

Using Environmental Health Data to Inform Pool Regulatory Efforts in the City of Long Beach, California – Webinar Q&A

1. Regarding changes to compliance rate results, do you think COVID played a role in results in 2021/2022?

The COVID pandemic had an impact on the design and early phases of our project. Regarding compliance rates, we haven't determined yet whether there was a noticeable impact in the couple years after the pandemic; however, in 2020 quite a few public pools and spas were closed due to health orders. There may have been some impacts in 2021 as pool operators and maintenance staff were gearing back up operations and adjusting to any remaining health orders and impacts. We plan on evaluating this aspect of the project in more detail.

2. What is a plan check? It is referred to a lot for a reason to not be included in the intervention program.

Plan check is the process where pool operators submit plans (drawings) when they are building a new pool or remodeling an existing pool to ensure that their proposed work meets all applicable codes. For our evaluation, it was challenging to include pools that were low compliance but required plan check due to the extra time it generally takes to generate plans, submit them, and gain final approvals. We had certain goals to meet for the grant program and we were concerned if pools needing plan check were in the intervention group it might delay our results. However, if a jurisdiction were considering this type of activity, we expect that many low-compliance pools will require plan check so it would be a good idea to provide the intervention if timing isn't an issue.

3. Was the same inspector doing the inspections each year?

Yes, it was the same inspector for this project, who unfortunately could not be here today.

4. Was staff turnover or pool operator turnover a factor in compliance?

No health Dept staff turnovers, but yes, we did incur property management company or pool operator turn over as a factor.

5. How much staff time was dedicated to the program?

To administer the grant program, which includes other activities and deliverables, the FTEs are higher than if a similar program were considered without any other grant related deliverables. Without the extra activities of a grant program, we estimate FTEs per year to include an Environmental Health Specialist (40-60 hours); Program Supervisor (20-30 hours); Data Management Specialist (40-60 hours); Support i.e Clerical or other Admin Support (20-30 hours). These estimates are based on our inventory of 500 public pools and spas and performing the intervention at the lowest 5-10% compliance pools annually. We didn't require any supplies or materials beyond those we already had such as laptops, inspection supplies, office supplies, and a data management system.

6. I know the data showed some general summary of overall averages, but did you look at whether the change in their compliance score was due to different violations being observed, or were

you seeing that the sites that stayed the same or decreased their score was due to the same violations being observed?

That is one of the data points and trends we still need to evaluate. We do notice recurring violations in some lower compliance public pools and spas, so it wouldn't be surprising if we find that in our intervention and control groups.

7. How did you start your partnership with local fire departments for near drowning?

We approached the Fire Department a few years ago realizing that when there is a drowning / near-drowning incident, it should be a practice for our Water Quality Program to respond, close the pool, and instruct the pool operator to perform essential cleaning and maintenance as needed, and when completed we will return to the pool and re-open it when the operator has conducted these activities. The Fire Department was receptive to this and we worked out the details to have an Environmental Health Specialist from our Water Quality program on call 24/7 to respond. We already had a system for this in our HazMat program for response 24/7 to hazardous waste spills, so we were able to use this system for the on-call response to drownings / near-drowning incidents.